

God's Mission-My Mission Mission to My Neighbor

Lesson #7 for November 18, 2023

Scriptures: Luke 10:25-37; 2 Timothy 3:16; James 2:17-22; Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14; Micah 6:6-8.

1. Who is my neighbor? What is my mission to my neighbor?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] We all know the text: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” ’ ” (Luke 10:27, NIV). Yet, our love for God can become superficial if we say that we love God but do not obey Him. We think that we love God, but how is this love demonstrated in our day-to-day life? Loving God requires full commitment of our heart, soul, body, and mind—daily. Anyone can say that he or she loves God; doing it, however, requires conscious effort.

However, even though loving God is good and important, God also wants us to love others, because our love for others reflects our love for God, and it does so in a powerful and very real way. First John 4:20 states, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (NKJV). Paul also says in Galatians 5:14 that “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (NKJV).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, November 11.†§

1 John 4:20: If we say we love God, but hate our brothers and sisters, we are liars. **For people cannot love God, whom they have not seen, if they do not love their brothers and sisters, whom they have seen.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., 1 John 4:20). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].†‡

2. Does this verse seem correct to you? I have never had any problems “loving God.” But, there are some people around that I have a little problem with! Notice that it says: If you do not love your “brothers and sisters.” Does that imply only other church members? How should these ideas and this passage of Scripture apply to us in 2023?
3. There are some questions that are so significant that they are asked over and over again despite the fact that different people have given quite different answers. They are called *the existential questions*: Where did we come from? Why are we here? How can we do the most good while we are here? And, where do we go after we die?
4. In contrast to the length of time that the universe has existed or even the length of time that our solar system has existed, our individual lives seem like “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14, NKJV*)
5. So, the next question to ask is: If we do not spend time in eternity with God in heaven, what is the other option?

1 Corinthians 15:30-32: ³⁰And as for us—why would we run the risk of danger every hour? ³¹My brothers and sisters, I face death every day! The pride I have in you, in our life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord, makes me declare this. ³²If I have, as it were, fought “wild beasts” here in Ephesus simply from human motives, what have I gained? But if the dead are not raised to life, then, as the saying goes, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die.”—*Good News Bible*.*

6. As we know, there are many other religions in the world. There are also many who don't think religion should have anything to do with their lives!

[BSG:] For instance, our Muslim friends ask us questions related to Jesus' divinity, such as, “Where in the Bible did Jesus say that He is God?” or “Why do you say there is one God when you have three persons in the Trinity?” Though these seem to be provocative questions, yet the heartfelt need for Jesus can be genuine and can represent a deep longing or emptiness of those asking the questions. We don't know their hearts; we don't need to. We simply need to minister to others the best we can, regardless of their deepest motives.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, November 13.‡

7. The Bible is full of principles and ideas illustrated by many stories that help to answer the most important questions.

Acts 17:11: The people there [in Berea] were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica. They listened to the message with great eagerness, and every day they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true.—*Good News Bible*.*‡

1 Corinthians 15:3: I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures.—*Good News Bible*.*

2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful [Footnote: *Every scripture inspired by God is also useful*] for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living.—*Good News Bible*.*‡§

Luke 10:26: Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”—*Good News Bible*.*

8. However, there are many people who do not want to bother themselves with an effort to search the Scriptures to work out the answers. Others approach Scripture with a number of preconceived ideas which prevent them from understanding the Bible correctly. Could we fall into one or the other of those categories?
9. Of course, we need to recognize that the Bible stories happened in a different context and different culture using different languages than we use today. It is important for us to try to understand the stories in their context.
10. But, there is a big difference between having the right Bible answers and actually living them out in one's life.

James 2:17-22: ¹⁷ So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “One person has faith, another has actions.” My answer is, “Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.” ¹⁹Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe—and tremble with fear. ²⁰You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless? ²¹How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. ²²Can’t you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions.—*Good News Bible*.*

11. In other words, Christianity is a complete way of living our lives and not just a set of distinct beliefs or doctrines.

James 2:15-16: ¹⁵Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don’t have enough to eat. ¹⁶**What good is there in your saying to them, “God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!”—if you don’t give them the necessities of life?**—*Good News Bible*.*†

12. How much do you care about the welfare of others?

13. The members of the Philippian church were great friends of Paul, and they supported him to a considerable extent. In turn, he essentially said: “You Philippians need to look after one another’s interests, not just your own.” (Philippians 2:4)

14. Probably the best-known *love* passage in the entire Bible is 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13: ¹ I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. ²I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains—but if I have no love, I am nothing. ³I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt—but if I have no love, this does me no good.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; ⁵love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; ⁶love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. ⁷Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

⁸ Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. ⁹For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; ¹⁰but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

¹¹ When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I have grown up, I have no more use for childish ways.

¹²What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God’s knowledge of me.

¹³ Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.—*Good News Bible*.*

15. Is it really humanly possible to live up to all those criteria?
16. We do not know how the foreknowledge of Jesus actually worked. Was it that His Father had revealed to Him each evening or in His night in prayer what was going to happen the next day? Or, did He have inherent ability to perceive the truth about those who came to Him and questioned Him?
17. In the case of one Bible scholar who tried to trap Jesus, Jesus turned the question back to him. The scholar was able to answer his own question.

Luke 10:25: A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?”—*Good News Bible*.*

18. In the context it seems pretty clear that this so-called *scholar of the Scriptures* was hoping to trap Jesus into saying something the Pharisees and Sadducees could use against Him. Ellen White suggested he was not so friendly with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and had a lot of questions about their long list of “dos and don’ts.”
19. But, as usual, Jesus managed to turn this question around to teach a very important lesson. Doesn’t the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” seem like a very important question?

Luke 10:27-28: ²⁷ The man answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbour [*sic-Br*] as you love yourself.’ ”

²⁸ “You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

20. When the Bible scholar asked Jesus who his neighbor was, he got a story instead of a plain answer.

Luke 10:30-37: ³⁰ Jesus answered, “There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. ³¹It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. ³²In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. ³⁴He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.’ ”

³⁶ And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour [*sic-Br*] towards the man attacked by the robbers?”

³⁷ The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.”

Jesus replied, “You go, then, and do the same.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[EGW:] **This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ's words.**—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 499.1.†‡

[EGW:] The Levite was of the same tribe as was the wounded, bruised sufferer.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* January 1, 1895, par. 5; *Welfare Ministry** 47.1.‡ [The person lying beside the road was a Levite.]‡

[BSG:] Are there people around us who have been unjustly treated by others? Have we done whatever we can to help them?

It is true that sometimes pastors, elders, and members do not help those who need help. Sometimes people of another faith may be kinder toward people in the community than we are. We may talk about being kind; yet, others may meet the needs of people that we don't address. If our faith means anything, we must reach out and help those in need.

Jesus concluded the story of the good Samaritan by asking who among the three was truly a neighbor to the person who needed help.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, November 16.‡

[EGW:] **Thus the question, “Who is my neighbor?” is forever answered. Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 503.5.†‡

[BSG:] Challenge: Begin praying daily for someone who is different from you, or even for someone you may not personally like.

Challenge Up: List at least three names of your acquaintances (non-Adventists); identify their needs (emotional, physical, social), and consider how you can minister personally to those needs. What can you do practically for them in the coming week?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, November 16.‡

21. It is interesting to notice that the scribe who was supposed to be a biblical scholar could not even bring himself to say the word *Samaritan*! So, he said: “The one who had mercy on him.”
22. How might this story be applied in our day? Should we be assisting whenever we see someone stopped beside the road who might need help? If not, are there other situations in which the story might be applicable?
23. Do you know the other members of your church well enough to know if some of them are hurting? Or, needy? Or, even hungry? Does your church have a definite plan for reaching out to help these people?
24. In another encounter with a scholar trying to trap Jesus:

Matthew 22:37-40: ³⁷ Jesus answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the greatest and

the most important commandment. ³⁹The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbour [*sic-Br*] as you love yourself.'
⁴⁰The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments."—*Good News Bible*.*‡

25. It seems like people would have discovered after a while that every time they raised a question with Jesus, trying to trap Him, they would end up in trouble themselves. Do we also have trouble learning from our mistakes?

26. Is it easy to love your neighbor as you love yourself? How many people do you think are actually able to do that? Notice these words about that problem from Ellen White.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character.** This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 49.1.†‡

27. Compare Ellen White's words with these by Paul, Micah, and John.

Galatians 5:14: For the whole Law is summed up in one commandment: "**Love your neighbour [*sic-Br*] as you love yourself.**"—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

Micah 6:6-8: ⁶What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my firstborn child to pay for my sins? ⁸No, the LORD has told us what is good. **What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

1 John 4:20-21: ²⁰If we say we love God, but hate our brothers and sisters, we are liars. For people cannot love God, whom they have not seen, if they do not love their brothers and sisters, whom they have seen. ²¹**The command that Christ has given us is this: all who love God must love their brother or sister also.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

28. We certainly are aware of the fact that there are many people in our world, especially in what is described as the third world, who are hungry and needy. But, most of us do not have the privilege of going and trying to help them personally. It is, of course, possible to send money to help through agencies like the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

29. But, what about the poor and needy in our own societies? Do we personally know someone who is hurting because they are hungry and/or needy?

30. What about people who are facing injustice, even bigotry? That is a huge problem around the world today.

[EGW:] Pure religion and undefiled before the Father is this: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Good deeds are the fruit that Christ requires us to bear: kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. When hearts sympathize with hearts burdened with discouragement and grief, when the hand dispenses to the needy, when the

naked are clothed, the stranger made welcome to a seat in your parlor and a place in your heart, angels are coming very near, and an answering strain is responded to in heaven. Every act of justice, mercy, and benevolence makes melody in heaven. The Father from His throne beholds those who do these acts of mercy, and numbers them with His most precious treasures. "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." **Every merciful act to the needy, the suffering, is regarded as though done to Jesus.** When you succor the poor, sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriend the orphan, you bring yourselves into a closer relationship to Jesus.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 2, 25.1.†‡

31. There are many religions in the world that are based on "salvation by works." Is it possible that there are some who "love their neighbors" in order to earn a way to heaven? How can we tell whether we are trying to earn our way to heaven by doing good deeds? Or, whether our Christianity just produces the right kind of behavior?

Philippians 2:5-8: ⁵The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶ He always had the nature of God,
but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

⁷ Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had,
and took the nature of a servant.

He became like a human being
and appeared in human likeness.

⁸ He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—
his death on the cross.—*Good News Bible*.*

32. How good are we at identifying our natural prejudices and biases?

33. Jesus often faced the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Bible scholars one way or another. Finally, near the end of His life, He had these words to say:

Matthew 23:1-39: ¹ Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. ² "The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees are the authorized interpreters of Moses' Law. ³ So you must obey and follow everything they tell you to do; do not, however, imitate their actions, because they don't practice what they preach....

¹³ "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces, and you yourselves don't go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter!...

¹⁶ "How terrible for you, blind guides! You teach, 'If someone swears by the Temple, he isn't bound by his vow; but if he swears by the gold in the Temple, he is bound.' ¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important, the gold or the Temple which makes the gold holy?

²³ "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You give to God a tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without

neglecting the others. ²⁴Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink, but swallow a camel!...

²⁷ “How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear good to everybody, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and sins.

²⁹ “How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You make fine tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of those who lived good lives; ³⁰and you claim that if you had lived during the time of your ancestors.... ³⁵As a result, the punishment for the murder of all innocent people will fall on you, from the murder of innocent Abel to the murder of Zachariah son of Berachiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar. ³⁶I tell you indeed: the punishment for all these murders will fall on the people of this day!

³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! ³⁸And so your Temple will be abandoned and empty. ³⁹From now on, I tell you, you will never see me again until you say, ‘God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.*†

34. If Jesus were here today, would He be crying over your church? Or, my church?
35. Many people feel that the life of Jesus spelled out in the New Testament is very different from the descriptions of God in the Old Testament. However, consider these comments.

[BSG:] The prophets urged the people and their leaders to “seek justice, defend the oppressed. Take up the [sic] cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (*Isa. 1:17, NIV*) and forbade the oppression of “the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor” (*Zech. 7:10, NKJV*). The prophets also were fierce in their condemnation of all injustice. Elijah rebuked King Ahab for murdering Naboth and stealing his vineyard. Amos fulminated against the rulers of Israel because, in return for bribes, they trampled on the heads of the poor, crushed the needy, and denied justice to the oppressed, instead of letting “justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream.”—John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990), p. 236.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94.‡§

Isaiah 1:17: “Learn to do right. See that justice is done—help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Zechariah 7:10: “Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners who live among you, or anyone else in need. And do not plan ways of harming one another.”—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] The structure and society of Israel “exalted labor, denounced idleness, expected fathers to train their sons to acquire skills with their hands, furthered human reciprocity, and justice, and demonstrated an active concern for one’s neighbors,” and, notably, “it respected the dignity of both men and women, the bearers of the divine image.”—Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God’s Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 88 Moreover, worship and obedience to God are directly related to justice and philanthropy. These sets go hand in hand, just as justice and mercy to one’s neighbor are related to walking humbly before God. All instructions and regulations for the well-being and fair treatment of the poor, alien, orphan, widow, and vulnerable have their origins in God, the One who cares for His children and shows compassion and mercy to whomsoever needs Him. In an echo of the biblical message, one writer sums up in this way the gospel directive to care for the poor: “to speak about poverty is to touch the Heart of God.”—William Robert Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty Among Biblical Peasants* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), p. 8.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94-95.†§

36. Some of these questions can be very perplexing.

[BSG:] Oftentimes a question is asked: How can my neighbor, who is often the poor, the homeless, and the unemployed, be helped to secure the blessings of God’s providence and to live the life Jesus intended humans to live?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95.‡

37. Here is a statement from Ellen G. White that provides light on the subject.

[EGW:] If men would give more heed to the teaching of God’s word, they would find a solution of these problems that perplex them. Much might be learned from the Old Testament in regard to the labor question and the relief of the poor....

In God’s plan for Israel every family had a home on the land, with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world’s departure from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and wretchedness that exist today.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 183.2-184.0.‡

[EGW:] **It is God’s purpose that the rich and the poor shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy and helpfulness.**—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 193.1.†‡

38. Have you ever taken it upon yourself to look around in your community to see if there are people nearby who are needy?

[BSG:] **“The message of the Old Testament is a call to an ethical lifestyle modeled in what God has done for us in Christ. It has to do with following God’s principles through living a life of witnessing to, helping, and loving the neighbor and those in need as yourself.”**—Jiří

Moskala, "The Mission of God's People in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 19, nos. 1–2 (2008): p. 58....

The ministry of compassion manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus was the best possible example provided for the disciples, apostles, followers, and new believers of the early apostolic church. Jesus (Immanuel) dwelt among men and women to restore and save, to heal and forgive, with a love that was even stronger than death itself. His special attention toward the neighbor, the other—which included the needy, the poor, the sick, the demon-possessed, the foreigner, and many others—caused the Son of God to devote a large portion of His time and energy to healing and caring for them all during His earthly ministry....

When the needs of both church members and nonmembers are met, when we become neighbors to the poor and attend to their needs, when we see the hungry and thirsty and feed them, when we clothe the naked and visit the imprisoned, then the members of the body of Christ have true fellowship with God and with one another. This fellowship demonstrates that we are no longer selfish but can share together and live out a life that testifies to a true and pure religion and life, the life of Christ.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95-96.†§

Galatians 6:10: So then, as often as we have the chance, we should do good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to our family in the faith.—*Good News Bible*.*

Romans 12:20: Instead, as the scripture says: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink; for by doing this you will make them burn with shame."—*Good News Bible*.*

39. Are we beginning to get an idea about what it might be like if Jesus were alive in our day?

[EGW:] Real charity helps men to help themselves. If one comes to our door and asks for food, we should not turn him away hungry; his poverty may be the result of misfortune. But true beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 195.2.‡

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